

MEETING OF CHANDLER'S FORD PARISH COUNCIL

7.00 PM 27 JANUARY 2020 FRYERN PAVILION, GREENWAYS, CHANDLER'S FORD

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Chairman Cllr Duguid, Councillors: Atkinson, Aubry, Bicknell, Bourne, Broadhurst, Child, Cox, Dolbear, Evans, Holden-Brown, Hughes, Irish, Johnson, Kyrle, Newcombe, Pragnell and Ricketts.

In Attendance: Duncan Murray (Parish Clerk) and Jacky Wilson.

Public Participation:

There were no members of the public present.

885 APOLOGIES

There were none.

886 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

887 COUNCILLOR TRAINING

The Chairman introduced Dawn Hamblett, CEO of HALC who was present to give some guidance to Members on the role of a Parish Councillor and to encourage take up of training opportunities.

She stressed the importance of complying with the 7 Nolan Principles of being in public office. She also clarified that the role of a Parish Councillor was different to those of Borough or County Councillors and that no Cllr by themselves could make decisions. Standing Orders were identified as setting the Council's operating framework and Terms of Reference for Committees. Members could undertake research but had to be careful not to (or be perceived to) enter into any obligations with third parties.

The only person(s) that could implement decisions of the Council/Committees were the Council's Officers as per the Financial Regulations.

Out and about as Councillors you have a responsibility to the view of the Council especially on social media. As an individual you can express your own views, but you have to differentiate between the two. Therefore, if you do use social media ensure you have different accounts for your different roles (private and elected).

It was commented that from a GDPR position that councillors should have separate email accounts for the Council correspondence otherwise the Information Commissioner could demand access to all your emails if a data breach is suspected.

Success as a councillor comes with undertaking the role with a similar approach to a Non-Executive Director, holding the organisation to account, having a strategic overview.

Key actions for councillors

- Decisions should consider the benefit to the community
- Setting the annual budget/precept
- 5-year plan/foresight
- Employ officers to carry out roles
- Clerk/Parish Office is first line of contact - appropriate committee is for appeals
- Reflect the community's views
- Ensure adequate financial controls/processes are in place
- Ensure Internal Auditor is retained
- Implementation of resolved policies, and
- Represent views to other councillors.

The role of the Clerk (Proper Officer) was to provide appropriate and unbiased advice to the Council.

Members asked a couple of questions and the training/briefing session came to an end with the Chairman thanking Dawn for her input.

888 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman gave his report. In which he commented that with the Christmas break and the last meeting only being a few weeks ago that there was not much to report. The Hiltngbury paths were looking for alternative funding opportunities, decisions had been taken about the marketing of the new sports hall.

889 TO APPROVE/ACCEPT MINUTES OF MEETINGS

- a) **to approve the minutes of meeting of the Parish Council held on 16 December 2019,**
- b) **to approve the minutes of the Extraordinary Planning Committee meeting of 7 January 2020,**
- c) **to approve the minutes of the Asset Management Committee meeting of 13 January 2020, and**
- d) **to approve the confidential minutes of the HR Committee meeting of 23 January 2020.**

Each minute was gone through for accuracy with corrections being made to a typo in the header of the Planning Committee and the date of the next AMC was corrected to 3 February. Following proposal, seconding and on a show of hands for each item, all of the meeting's minutes along with the financial reports were all AGREED.

A Member asked about the updated meeting dates schedule in minute point 881, the Clerk apologised for not circulation the list and would do so.

890. TO DISCUSS AND AGREE

- a) **the Budget, and**
- b) **to set the Precept for the financial year 2020 – 2021 at £483,798 an increase of 2.25% to £52.69p for a Band D property.**

The Clerk briefed Members on the reasoning behind the budget figures in the following terms:

“As the Responsible Finance Officer for this Parish Council I have a legal duty to bring forwards a proposed budget to the Council that is both reasonable and justifiable and that is necessarily based on historical fact and known future impacts. This coming financial year will be a tough one. In 2020-21 a further tranche (33.3% of 2018-2019's formula) of the Council Tax Support Grant will disappear and in 2021-22 there will be none.

“Over the last 4-years our revenue budget figures have been very much in line with expenditure. Most cost-centres are predictable, but this year there is a new ‘player’ in town, and we do not have a full year's costs to predict by, and although £20k has been put aside for Non-Domestic Rates, that is only an extrapolation from what we pay for Fryern...and it could be higher...

“There have only been 6 months of trading so far by the sports hall, and whilst the income trend is most definitely upwards (such as 14 Jan the sports hall was at 100% occupancy for the 6 evening peak hours and yesterday at 77% occupancy 7.00am to 10.00pm) it averages off-peak occupancy of between 17 and 22% with a business case ‘target’ of 12.5%. During peak hours it averages between 61 to 87.5% with a ‘target’ of 50%. Studio lettings have so far been disappointingly slow. The Council must be precautionary in what its projections are until we have at least a couple of years' trading to give us relatively reliable figures.

"I must, as the RFO, also take a prudent approach and will not say we need less confirmed funds coming in than I consider necessary, neither will I overstate what increase might be necessary.

"Members should, in their debate and resolution on the budget and Precept, remember it is far easier, with minimal cash reserves left, to cope with a surplus rather than a potential significant deficit.

"Members must also remember that at the end of June the final account/retention payment to Acheson Construction Ltd of an anticipated £52k (ex VAT) will be due, potentially leaving our reserves at some £48k. I can confirm that as of today TKLS Architects have issued confirmation of closure of their EoT claims, with no further financial consideration, for being out of time. Thereby removing a claim of some £70k.

"Members might wish to see a higher projected income for the sports hall in 2020-2021 and anticipate that there will be more money 'splashing' around. We might well significantly exceed £82.5k in income from the new facility, but even if we do, all that surplus will be needed to rebuild our General Fund to £100k as a minimum, to ensure we comply with our own reserves policy. It will probably be a couple of years before any balance can be carried forwards into the budget (as we will probably have to defer utilising any sports hall surplus for actual expenditure to the beginning of the 2022 financial year).

"The contingency will remain rather small at £26k (5.3%), and it is possible that there are already requirements for use of part of this fund as the national SLCC salary scales for 2020-2021 are yet to be agreed. Whilst I have allowed for 2.5%, the unions are pressing for 10%, therefore there might be a potential further 2.5 - 7.5% increase to the salary costs.

"The PWLB loan repayments are guaranteed by £82.4k of the Asset Improvement Fund in the coming financial year (as required by statute/contract with the DCLG borrowing requirements). Payments are taken 6-monthly, August and February, comprising £23,333.33 of capital and a reducing interest figure (currently around £18k each payment). It is important to remember that this is due to the need to avoid a double taxation (which is unlawful) by the devaluation of an assets' financial worth. Therefore, all assets are effectively written off at the financial year end, so the only 'chargeable asset' that a Parish Council has is its Precept, and a diminishing, but legal charge will remain on that until the loan is repaid in full.

"There are some funds that are potentially going to remain at 31 March 2020 that can be carried over into the coming financial year, which will have a positive impact, but these probably equate to about £10k and will help patch any calls on additional funds that might appear for the reasons outlined above.

"There is no underestimating the need for this very precautionary approach to the budget and Precept for the coming year, and the period of consolidation I have been promoting for the last year or so. It is abundantly clear that a 2.25% increase in Precept is needed, at a minimum, for the coming 12 months and that 2020-2021 will potentially be a very tight financial year!"

The Clerk also confirmed that especially in the early days of trading a new venture the budget wasn't about setting income expectations but what could realistically be expected to be a minimum income so that the books could be balanced. Councillors agreed with this approach and the need to consolidate and focus on growing the income stream from the sports hall..

After the briefing Members made comment on it being a difficult year to forecast and thanked the Officer for producing a sensible budget. Members asked questions about the youth provision, what figure a 1% rise would account for and the split of the asset improvement fund figure from £125k.

Future budget impacts were identified as the cost of climate change initiatives and potential increases to allotment rates.

Following proposal, seconding and on a show of hands the budget was RESOLVED.

Following a further proposal, seconding and on a show of hands the net Precept for the financial year 2020 – 2021 was RESOLVED at £483,798 an increase of 2.25% to £52.69p for a Band D property.

891. TO AGREE TO TRANSFER THE BUDGETED £3,000 FROM THE COMMUNITY EVENTS FUND TO THE COUNCIL'S EVENTS ACCOUNT FOR 2019-2020 TO UNDERWRITE THE VE DAY FUNTASIA.
Following proposal, seconding and on a show of hands the bank transfer was AGREED.

892. TO AGREE THE RECOMMENDATION FROM POLICY AND FINANCE TO ADOPT THE UPDATED RESERVES POLICY.
Following proposal, seconding and on a show of hands the updated Reserves Policy was AGREED.

893. MEMBER'S QUESTIONS (none submitted for the Agenda).

There were no confidential matters taken forwards from the HR Committee and therefore item 10 was removed from the agenda.

The date and place of next meeting of Full Council was confirmed as 7.00pm 30 March 2020 at Fryern Pavilion, Greenways, Chandler's Ford.

That being the conclusion of business the meeting closed at 7.55pm.

Chairman.....